The Labour Party
150 Walworth Road
London SE17 1JT
Telephone 071-701 1234
Telex 8811237 Labour G
Fax 071-234 3300
Direct line:

RT/vc

12 October, 1992.

Salem Azzam
Secretary General
Islamic Council
16 Grosvenor Crescent
LONDON SW1X 7EP.

Dear Secretary General

Thank you for your letter addressed to Rt Hon John Smith QC MP. Your letter has been read by Mr Smith, and it has been passed to me in my capacity as International Officer for the Labour Party, for a response.

The Labour Party's policy on Iraq was summarised by Mr Jack Cunningham MP, the Shadow Foreign Minister, on the emergency debate at the House of Commons on 25.9.92. As you can see from the record of that speech (attached), we firmly believe that the Iraqi regime must fully comply with all the relevant United Nations Resolutions. We recognise the humanitarian needs in Iraq. We believe, however, that lifting the UN sanctions cannot be justified at this stage. It would not guarantee the Iraqi regimes compliance with UN Resolutions nor would it strengthen the Iraqi regimes commitment to meet humanitarian needs in the country.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

H.R. TRIVEDY
INTERNATIONAL OFFICER.

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movement, and especially on the latter two matters, to prevent any repetition of what happened in Boipatong and Ciskei.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has strayed on to South Africa. I do not criticise him for that but I did not do it because I thought that it would be out of order. However, as he is in that territory I can tell him that I share his pleasure about today's news. Yesterday, I spoke on the telephone to Nelson Mandela and the South African Foreign Minister. Each explained the narrow difference between them at that stage on the issue of political prisoners. I am delighted that it has been resolved. We are backing the peace accords and the work of Mr. Goldstone, with whom I had a long talk in South Africa a few weeks ago, by sending people from this country and other European countries as monitors to support the peace accords and the new peace structures on the ground in the townships.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful for that intervention. It is clear that the right hon. Gentleman is actively involved and we appreciate that and applaud it. The Government have many channels through which to urge President de Klerk to move more swiftly on these crucial matters and I am pleased to learn that the channels are being used.

I shall now deal with the situation in the Gulf. I thank the Foreign Secretary for his letter about Paul Ride and Michael Wainwright and for his quick response to the representations by my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) about those two unfortunate gentlemen. I urge the Foreign Secretary to continue to do all in his power to seek their early release.

When I wrote to the Foreign Secretary in August, I expressed Labour's support for an air exclusion zone over southern Iraq with the object of giving some protection to the Shia Moslem communities of the marshes. I reiterate that support. The air exclusion zone introduced last year to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq was justified and successful. It had the authority of UN Security Council resolution 688 as well as the justification of general humanitarian protection. The zone was rightly given wide all-party support, and as the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner recently stated in his report that a major further series of threats to the Shias was imminent, the same action is clearly in order.

I also make clear our position about any proposed military attacks on ground targets in Iraq. Such attacks cannot be justified and should not be made unless and until the United Nations Security Council has considered and approved them in advance—if they are necessary at all. We certainly make clear to the House and to the United States of America that we will not support any adventurism in Iraq by President Bush in aid of his re-election.

Finally, I shall deal briefly with what the Foreign Secretary said about the United Nations. It is clear that the UN is overloaded and that Britain is nowhere near meeting the United Nations target for aid programmes. It is also clear that the Conservative Government's contributions to many multilateral agencies of the United Nations are lower in real terms now than they were in 1979. Hopes of a new world order have not been fulfilled and many people, including the Opposition, place more and more demands on the United Nations.

The Foreign Secretary said that the UN should have an imperial role. No phrase could be more calculated to offend the non-aligned countries of the third world. He quickly changed the phrase and spoke instead about good old-fashioned diplomacy when he spoke at the UN. He should have used such diplomacy much earlier this summer in his relations with Dr. Boutros-Ghali, and if he had perhaps an unseemly and unhelpful row could have been avoided. The United Nations needs restructuring but above all it needs more finance and more personnel. Many millions of dollars are outstanding in contributions, principally, I regret to say, from the United States. If the Foreign Secretary wants the UN to work more effectively, as we do, he should ensure that it has adequate resources and should give it more support and help so that it can more effectively tackle the important tasks that we are discussing.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Long after the circumstances that give rise to the personal statement that is to be made are forgotten, people will surely ask how, on Monday, Pitchford hall, an almost unique 16th century timber-framed house, was allowed to come under Christies' hammer. During this personal statement, may we have a personal explanation of why——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should wait until we have heard the statement. I have taken his point.

It being 11 o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

المجلس الإسلامي
Islamic Council

8 September 1992

Mr John Smith MP
House of Commons
London SW1

Dear Mr Smith,

Firstly, may I congratulate you on your election as leader of the Labour Party and your consequent position as Leader of HM's Opposition.. I wish you every success in this position of great responsibility.

I heard that in your demand for a recall of Parliament one of the issues you wanted debated was Iraq. Might I suggest to you that, in a humanitarian context, it is now time to press for the lifting of sanctions against that country.

Since the end of the Gulf war the ordinary people of Iraq have been suffering great hardship continuously. Numerous impartial reports by international aid organisations, for example Oxfam, who have travelled widely throughout Iraq testify to the lack of food, water, medicines and other basic necessities of life, and the resultant rise in disease, malnutrition, infant mortality and other premature and avoidable deaths.

The last two visits to Iraq by the UN inspectors have, the inspectors themselves say, been met with Iraq's full cooperation and their team leader, Maurizio Zifferero, has stated that Iraq's nuclear bomb programme is now 'at zero'.In this case, surely the suffering of the Iraqi people must now be eased.

A lead from the Labour Party on this humanitarian issue would be well received by the developing world, and by the Muslim people in particular, who are agonised by the situation in Iraq.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Salem Azzam
Secretary General

16, Grosvenor Crescent London SW1X 7EP Tel: 071-235 9832 Fax: 071-823 1590